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The Future of Russian-Japanese Relations in Light of the Crisis in the Kuril Islands

El futuro de las relaciones entre Rusia y Japón a la luz de la crisis de las islas Kuril

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ABSTRACT

Relations between Russia and Japan follow two unequal tracks, a network of cooperation slowly expanding in various fields, and a territorial dispute over the Kuril Islands. In 1956, Japan and the Soviet Union signed the ceasefire agreement. Japan binds the conclusion of the peace treaty between the two countries, with the return of Russia to the four Kuril Islands that the Soviet Union annexed to its lands in the framework of the results of the Second World War, while Russia is adhering to its right to own the Kuril Islands and considers it part of its security and sovereignty.

Keywords: Economy, Japan, Kuril Islands, Russia, security.

RESUMEN

Las relaciones entre Rusia y Japón siguen dos vías desiguales, una red de cooperación que se expande lentamente en varios campos y una disputa territorial sobre las Islas Kuriles. En 1956, Japón y la Unión Soviética firmaron el acuerdo de alto al fuego. Japón se une a la conclusión del tratado de paz entre los dos países, con el regreso de Rusia a las cuatro islas Kuriles que la Unión Soviética anexó a sus tierras en el marco de los resultados de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, mientras que Rusia se adhiere a su derecho de ser dueño de las Islas Kuriles y lo considera parte de su seguridad y soberanía.

Palabras clave: Economía, Islas Kuriles, Japón, Rusia, seguridad

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INTRODUCTION

At a time when Japan is looking forward to the huge energy and natural resources that Russia possesses compared to the resource-poor Japan, at the same time Russia is looking for Japanese technology and investments that benefit its development. This means that some problems can be overcome, including the dispute over the Kuril Islands. It hinders the development of their bilateral relations, even if only temporarily. One of the most important challenges facing Russian-Japanese relations is how to frame them in the context of the confrontation between Russia and the West as in growing Chinese hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region, which is a concern for both countries.

Russian-Japanese relations are among the international relations that combine importance and complexity at the same time, as it went through a very complex historical path, bringing with it a number of wars and disputes, especially with regard to the issue (the Kuril Islands), which competition was and still holds clear traces in the relations between the two parties.

The tension in Russian-Japanese relations cannot be deflected by the issue of the disputed Kuril Islands between the two sides since 1786 AD, because it greatly reduces the reality of the historical and geopolitical conflict between the two powers. Therefore, the analysis of the real causes of tension and disagreement between a world power like Russia, and a country part of the continental and regional powers system as Japan, could give us a clear picture of the course of relations between the two countries.

The importance of studying Russian-Japanese relations depends on the importance of both countries and their role in the regional and international surroundings, as the two countries seek to play a greater role on the international political scene, as Russia is one of the most important poles affecting the international system and aspires to regain its international position after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Japan also represents the Asian power it seeks to highlight its role in international issues, with the political and economic tools it possesses in its regional and international surroundings.

The research here calls for an examination of an important problem framing Russian-Japanese relations, as one of the most pressing problems facing relations between the two countries is the dispute over the Kuril Islands. However, the relations between the two countries continue and are positively represented by their cooperation in many fields. One of the most important challenges facing the relations between the two countries is how to frame relations between Moscow and Tokyo in the context of the confrontation between Russia and the West and the growing Chinese hegemony in the Asia Pacific region.

It would seem logical to start with the analysis of our research by asking some questions such as: -

What is the impact of the historical legacy of wars and disputes over the Kuril Islands on Russian-Japanese relations?

What is the extent of the influence of regional and international changes on the relations between Russia and Japan?

• Can the fields of cooperation between the two countries do their work in charting the future of relations between the two countries?

What are the chances of a solution to the issue of the Kuril Islands in the near or medium future?

Hypothesis:

We had to start in confronting this important issue within the limits of the imposition: The Russian-Japanese relations did not take a single form and oscillated between conflict and cooperation. Over the past decades, therefore, cooperation at the political, economic and security levels between Russia and Japan may be the necessary engine for overcoming the crisis of the Kuril Islands to a future based on cooperation as an alternative to the state of tension in relations between the two countries. Otherwise, the alternative may lead (with the absence of a solution to the crisis or the conclusion of a peace agreement or the sharing of sovereignty over the islands) at the end of the day to an armed conflict in the medium or long term that may include the entire region.

The first topic: The importance of the Kuril Islands and the historical dimension of the crisis

First - The Kuril Islands and its importance:

The disputed Kuril Islands between Russia and Japan are a series of islands that are punctuated by many active volcanoes and therefore have been called the Kuril. They are fourteen islands between Japan and the Russian (Sakhalin) island that extends for a distance of (1200 km) between the Russian (Kamchatka) Peninsula and the island of (Hokkaido) Japan in the far northeast of Asia, and separates these islands, the Sea of Akhotsk, which is located on the eastern border of Russia from the Pacific Ocean. These islands have a total area of about (15.5 thousand km²) and are inhabited by more than (20) thousand people, and are divided as follow:

The large Kuril chain includes the island (Iturup) with an area of three thousand km², and the island (Konashir) with an area of (1.5 thousand km²).

The small Kuril chain, including (Chicotan) Island (182 km²), as well as five islands belonging to the Habomai archipelago and groups of small islands that are prominent rocks from the sea, which are the islands (Oskolki, Diomin, and Skalny) with a general area (118 km²).

Russia calls these islands (the Southern Kuril Islands) as they overlook them from the south, while Japan calls them the "northern territories" because they overlook them from the north. (1)

The Kuril Islands occupy a strategic economic and military importance and weight. Economically it contains important natural resources, which can provide great economic returns for those who control it, as it is surrounded by rich fishing areas, where a third of the amount of fish caught in the Far East seas is caught, about (1.6) million tons of fish and marine materials annually. There are valuable types of fish in the South Kuril Strait, in addition to mineral resources, such as (titanium, magnesium, cobalt, copper, lead, zinc, platinum, gold and sulfur). There is also on the island (Iturup) a single field in the world of rare rhenium, along with gas and oil deposits. (2)

The islands are also gaining strategic importance for Russia, as it is the only line allowing entry into the Sea of Okhotsk and the Russian Far East region bordering the Pacific Ocean. It also greatly increases the continental defense zone and guarantees the security of transportation routes leading to military bases located on the Kamchatka Kra Peninsula and control of the waters of the Sea of Okhotsk and the airspace over it. It is increasingly important for hosting several Russian military bases, in which military activities are taking place, most notably the deployment of ballistic missile systems, and the deployment of Russian army teams. (3)

Second - historical dimensions:

Russia was on the Kuril Islands in the first half of the eighteenth century. In 1786, a decree was issued annexing the Kuril Islands to the Russian Empire. A hundred years later, Russia has in effect imposed control over it. (4) In 1798, the Japanese removed the Russian characters and installed columns stating that this land is property of the Japanese Empire, and by 1804, Russia and Japan jointly controlled part of the islands, and in February 1855, Russia and Japan signed the first bilateral trade agreement and border, which on the basis, peace and friendship between them were declared, and three Japanese ports were opened to Russian ships. (5) In 1875, the two sides signed a treaty under which Russia would give up an island from the Kuril to Japan, in return, Japan recognized the full Russian jurisdiction over Sakhalin, and a treaty remained The year 1875, valid until 1905, when Russia and Japan signed the Portsmouth Peace Treaty, as part of a victorious exit from the Russo-Japanese War between 1904 and 1905, Russia abandoned the entire Kuril and some lands in southern Sakhalin Island. (6)

In the same vein, Japan's defeat in World War II changed the situation on the ground in favor of Russia, which had regained control of the Kuril Islands. In 1956, the Soviet Union and Japan signed a joint declaration on ending the state of war and restoring diplomatic ties, and the Soviets temporarily agreed to give up the islands of Habomai and Shikotan to Japan in the event of a peace treaty. However, the peace treaty has not been signed, and Japan has made demands for the restoration of the four Kuril Islands (Habomai, Chicotan, Kunashir, and Iturup) which its northern territories consider to be. (7)

In the context of the Cold War, the United States supported Japan in its conflict with Russia over the islands, and made efforts to prevent the situation from easing between the two countries to resolve the crisis. While the Soviet Union considered that the issue of lands in relations with Japan was resolved in the Second World War. (8)

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Japan recognized that Russia was the legitimate heir of the Soviet Union. (9) By the year 2000, (Vladimir Putin) assumed power in Russia, which adopted a new policy that was more open to Russia's neighboring countries in Asia, he expressed (Putin) With the Japanese Prime Minister (Junichiro Koizumi) in 2005, he expressed his readiness to resolve the land dispute according to the 1956 statement, or rather hand over the islands of Habomai and Shikotan to Japan, but Japan did not agree. In the period from 2002 to 2008, the two countries continued to draw and pull about how to resolve the conflict between them, and this is due to the fact that official statements between the two sides were not encouraging to resolve the conflict on the one hand, and Russian President (Dmitry Medvedev) assumed power in Russia in general 2008, he was not positive on the other hand, in the year 2010, he visited the Kuril Islands, which provoked the official and popular dissatisfaction of Japan, and described the solution to the Kuril Islands issue as impossible. (10) The situation was repeated in 2015, when the Prime Minister (Dmitry Medvedev) visited the Kuril Islands In particular, the island of Iturup, and the Russian government has moved towards strengthening its military capabilities around the Elk Islands Real expressed her eligibility to act on these islands, according to the San Francisco Peace Treaty in 1952, and Russian military exercises on the islands increased in 2016. In January 2016, (Vladimir Putin) met with Prime Minister Shinzo. Abe) to discuss the situation of the islands, but the discussions did not reach a solution. (11)

The second topic: The nature of Russian-Japanese relations and factors of influence

There are factors or reasons that make both countries stick to their positions regarding the Kuril Islands, Russia and Japan, looking differently to the importance of these islands. As far as the matter is related to the Japanese position, it has always been the adherence to the four islands without conceding or negotiating or accepting the abandonment of any of these islands, on the basis of It is areas belonging to Japanese sovereignty and that the Soviet Union seized it illegally from the Japanese point of view, and Japan believes that its claim to restore these islands is related to national identity, and that the abdication of the islands is a abdication of Japanese sovereignty and its position among states. (12) As for the pain The Russian stood, for it was also clear. Russia considers the Kuril Islands to be within the sovereignty areas and is an integral part of their country. Therefore, it adheres to the Kuril Islands for reasons related to the concepts of national honor, and handing over the islands to Japan will be considered a recognition of weakness. So it may make sense that we analyze the conflict between Russia and Japan as a geopolitical struggle, which began in the seventeenth century AD with the expansion of the Russian Empire towards its neighbors. It is also a psychological struggle, as the fact that these historical geopolitical conflicts have created accumulations of feelings of mutual anger and anger between the two countries. It can also be considered a conflict of existence, given that Russia considers it a national, patriotic and sovereign issue that is difficult to concede or abandon, and that successive Japanese governments see it from the end of World War II until today. (13)

The dispute over the Kuril Islands is not just a geographical conflict, but is also related to global geopolitical transformations in the twenty-first century, as both countries aspire to obtain the largest possible degree of status, power and control over the international map in the current century. (14) It has affected many Factors or variables in Russian-Japanese relations and the course of the crisis over the Kuril Islands, including those related to Russia, including those related to Japan, and some that relate to regional and international factors:

First- The economic importance factor of the islands:

The Kuril Islands have a great importance that makes both parties stick to their eligibility. On the economic side, it provides access to one of the most productive fish regions in the world. The waters surrounding the Kuril Islands are among the richest areas for live marine resources marketable. As for the water stations located in these The islands, whose annual value is estimated at one billion dollars, have added more

economic importance to them, and the islands contribute about (45%) of the total fish wealth on Sakhalin Island. (15)

The waters surrounding the Kuril Islands are very important for the economy in North Hokkaido and the Russian Far East. The Kuril Islands include a variety of plants, hot springs, and natural monuments. The Konashir and Eturob Islands were considered destinations for tourists from the Soviet Far East region during the Soviet period, due to Their long and temperate summer, as well as many hot springs that number (160) are included, and given the financial revenues provided by tourism, the islands can be invested as a major tourist attraction, as well as to benefit from the money generated by tourism, besides that they go beyond Mineral resources on the islands include marine hydrocarbon deposits, gold, silver and iron, as well as the rare rhenium metal that is used in electronics, which is an important source of the Russian economy. The islands also provide annual Russian energy needs, although the islands do not have an oil reserve in their interior. Large compared to the rest of the Russian oil regions, which reaches (5-50) tons per square kilometer, but it contains titanium and sulfur minerals and commercial quantities on the sea floor, so the Russian Federation is trying to exploit and develop it. (16)

Second- The strategic and military importance of the islands:

Its strategic importance stems from the fact that it provides access to ice-free sea routes from the Sea of Okhotsk, so these islands control the movements of the Russian fleet in the Pacific located in Vladivostok, and these islands provide the possibility of the Japanese naval launch towards Pearl Harbor in the Gulf of Hitokabo in the port of Iturup. (17)

Russia has a base for its naval fleet in the Kuril Islands, and the establishment in 2016, a point for the concentration of Russian warships on the island of Matua, and rehabilitated the airport there, and deployed very modern coastal missile systems of the type "Pal" on Konashir and the "Bastion" on the island Europe, in addition to a coastal artillery division deployed on the islands in May 2017, the division periodically receives military equipment and new modern weapons, including drones. The missile units stationed on the two islands of the Russian Pacific Fleet are also conducting periodic training exercises, as conducted in May 2017. (18)

Three, the regional impact factor:

There are two important and influencing factors, namely, the growing strength of China and the North Korean nuclear program. China is a pivotal country in the regional and international system and has strong relations with Russia, which poses a strong threat to Japan's standing and Japan's Russian relations, and this importance also applies to North Korea's nuclear program, which is An international and regional threat. (19)

Chinese policy is based on gaining more strength, cooperation with other powers, especially the major powers, to achieve global balance. Today, the Chinese economy represents the second largest economy in the world, and it is also the most developed economy in the world in recent years. It is expected to become the largest economy in the world by 2030, as it possesses advanced nuclear capabilities, ICBMs, satellites and space stations. This allowed the power to shift The Chinese military has developed into a richer, better-equipped and more sophisticated combat force, giving it greater influence in the Asia-Pacific region. (20)

At a time when Russia is concerned with the deterioration of its relations with the West and the conflict in many regions of the world, whether in Ukraine or Georgia or in the Middle East region, specifically with regard to the Syrian crisis, Japan is concerned with the increasing influence of China in the Asia-Pacific region, and is also at risk of continuing North Korea's nuclear program The Japanese concern is embodied in the fact that North Korea's nuclear tests are able to target the security of the countries of the Asia region, especially Japan. North Korea has managed to produce nuclear warheads capable of targeting ports and military bases in Japan. Considering that Japan's strength and North Korea constitute a threat to its national security, it does not see in return in Russia a direct threat to it. (21)

INTERNATIONAL IMPACT FACTOR

It is represented in the largest degree by the United States of America, which is perhaps the most prominent factor affecting Russian-Japanese relations, considering that the United States of America is the most powerful country in the world and competes with Russia in several regions including the Pacific and is also in a strategic alliance with Japan, which constitutes a major impact on Russian relations. Japanese, and NATO expansion to affect relations between Russia and Japan, as well as events in the Middle East, especially in Syria. (22)

Japan and the United States of America have strategic relations through the security treaties and agreements signed between the two countries, such as the San Francisco Treaty in September 1951, which ended the US military occupation and the restoration of sovereignty to Japan, and the United States of America granted military bases throughout the Japanese region such as Okinawa Island. Since the formation of the American-Japanese alliance, the United States of America has exerted a great influence on Japan's relations with other countries, especially Russia, which is the largest rival of the United States of America in the international community. (23) On the other hand, Russia seeks to exploit the issue of the Kuril Islands and economic projects to distance Japan from the influence of influence The United States of America, which means that the differences and disputes between the United States of America and Russia are of negative impact on Russian-Japanese relations. There is also a great difference between Japan and Russia in their view on the role and influence of NATO, as Russia considers the alliance an enemy and a target against it, while Japan sees it as an aid to highlighting its role in the international political arena through mutual assistance and mutual information. (24)

The third topic \ cooperation between the two countries and its impact on the future of the crisis.

Relations between Russia and Japan go along two unequal tracks, a network of cooperation that is slowly expanding in various fields, and a territorial dispute over the Kuril Islands. Cooperation between the two countries takes many forms and at different levels:

First - The Political Field:

There are strong communication relations between the Russian and Japanese parliaments, including mutual visits to Tokyo and Moscow in 2009. During the first term of his presidency of Russia (2000-2004), Vladimir Putin's strategic goal was to integrate Russia into the international community, and to achieve this plan in a region Asia and the Pacific, he decided to amend relations with Tokyo and rely on Japanese funds and technologies to improve the external situation. During his visit in 2000, he proposed a major plan to expand the trans-Siberian railway to Japan and build an energy bridge between the two countries. As a result, a Russian-Japanese action plan was adopted in 2003, aimed at promoting political dialogue, and continuing talks on a peace treaty, economic cooperation and law enforcement. (25)

In an interview given by Russian President (Vladimir Putin) to the Japanese NTV channel on December 13, 2017, he said, "The atmosphere of trust and cooperation between the two countries must be created to serve the improvement of trade and economic relations on the broadest scale." And it is "of great importance to discuss ways of making joint efforts between Russia and Japan towards ensuring international security," he said, "Moscow is concerned about the growing dangers arising from the proliferation of nuclear weapons and missile technology because working on these tracks will create confidence between the two countries." Putin said that Russia and Japan currently lack a solid foundation on which to build bilateral relations in response to their aspirations. He added,

We have not created, and unfortunately, since the revival of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 1956, that is, a firm pillar that allows for building relations that meet our aspirations and are consistent with the requirements of the stage in terms of bilateral cooperation.

Russia and Japan are natural partners in the Far East region and the world as a whole. (26)

As for the Japanese Prime Minister (Shinzo Abe), since his coming to power he adopted a new approach to the conflict by promising greater economic relations, as a motive to facilitate negotiation. In 2016, Russian President Putin received the Japanese Prime Minister (Shinzo Abe) and a delegation of Russian ministers and businessmen in Japan. In order to discuss resolving the conflict besides concluding many commercial deals, many major achievements were achieved at that bilateral summit held in Moscow, notably the agreement of Japan and Russia to increase economic cooperation, and facilitate the access of the former residents to the four Kuril Islands, and the formation of a joint committee To investigate In the possibility of making joint investments on the islands. The Japanese Foreign Minister (Taro Kono) stressed that the only outstanding issue between his country and Russia is still the stalled peace treaty, and that the settlement requires the two sides to be flexible in their thinking.

We may see a Japanese-Russian rapprochement in the political stances towards an international or regional issue, and at the same time we may see dispersal and tension, due to the tensions and pressures that cast shadow on the relations of the two countries. Tension on the Korean peninsula and the Iranian nuclear file constituted a factor of rapprochement between the two countries, as Putin and Shinzo Abe expressed their common concern over the Korean nuclear crisis. On the other hand, the relations between the two countries were cooled due to the Russian occupation of Ukraine's Crimean peninsula.

Second - the economic field:

Russia occupies the fourteenth place among Japan's trading partners, and Russia's share of foreign trade in Japan is about (2.2%), and Japan is ranked eighth among Russia's trading partners, and its share of foreign trade in Russia is about (3.7%), and the volume of trade has increased Between them, they increased by 6.6% in 2016, and amounted to (33.2) billion dollars. (28)

Russia has tremendous energy and many natural resources compared to resource-poor Japan, while Moscow is searching for Japanese technology for development. Tokyo has actively contributed to the development of timber, fishing and shipping industries in Russia, and Japanese small and medium-sized businesses have become joint ventures, and Japanese companies have started Large-scale projects to explore oil and gas resources in Sakhalin. The cooperation in the field of trade between the two countries recorded a remarkable increase. In the year 2008, the value of trade exchange between the two countries reached (30) billion dollars. Japanese exports mostly included machinery, such as cars. As for Russian exports to Japan, it included raw materials, including oil and wood. (29) In 2016, Japan launched an initiative on strengthening Russian-Japanese cooperation in the Far East. Russia is counting on Japan's participation in activating projects in this region. Such as the rehabilitation of coal and iron fields, the modernization of the transit railways in Siberia, the construction of transportation centers, roads, tunnels, bridges and other infrastructure projects. (30)

On the level of mutual investments, relations in the field of investments between Russia and Japan have expanded in recent years. According to statistical information, the total Japanese investments in Russia in 2017 amounted to (1.9) billion dollars. The company "Toyota" is one of the largest and most active companies investing in the Russian economy. In 2007, the company operated a car assembly plant in the suburb of Petersburg. In 2008, Toyota set up a multi-functional complex that includes the office and a spare parts warehouse with investments amounting to \$ 120 million. Add to this major investment projects in the energy field on Sakhalin Island, the Japanese cigarette company GT in the city of Petersburg, the investments of the "Asakhi Garasu" company to construct a glass factory in the Nizhny Novgorod region and other investments. (31)

Three - the energy field:

The Russian-Japanese joint projects in the energy field is one of the main elements of the Russian-Japanese relations, as the Japanese natural gas and electric power companies achieved during the era of Prime Minister (Junichiro Koizumi) in 2003, long-term liquid gas missions within the framework of the "Sakhalin 2" project. So new investments were invested in the amount of about (10) billion dollars. (32) Besides that the

Japanese "Japan Pipeline Development Organization" and the Russian "Gazprom" company established the joint institution for the trade of natural gas in the European market. And a project to build a gas pipeline that will extend from Sakhalin Island to the Japanese island of Hokkaido. The line passes both land and marine tracks with a length of (192 km), and the project capacity is (3) billion cubic meters of gas annually. There is also a project to construct an oil pipeline leading to the Pacific coast, and the length of the pipeline (4100 km), and its cost (11) billion dollars, and its capabilities to pass (1.5) million barrels of oil per day. (33)

Fourth: The Technical Scientific Field:

Cooperation in the field of technical scientific exchange between the two countries on the governmental and private tracks makes significant progress. At the government level, within the framework of the agreement signed between the two governments on technical scientific cooperation and the agreement on cooperation in the field of scientific research and the use of the cosmic space for peaceful purposes and other agreements, it can be said that cooperation between The two governments have reached high levels of joint coordination. As for the level of private Japanese companies and Russian scientific studies and research institutions, coordination exists through conducting studies and research on the base of the International Technical Scientific Center, which is headquartered in Moscow. (34)

The third topic / future forward-looking vision

Through some indicators, we can deduce the features of the current and future status of Russian-Japanese relations and their most important issues, the Kuril Islands, which did not lead to any concrete formulas or common points of understanding or conflict resolution. In general, when dealing with the prospects for relations between the two countries in light of the dispute over the Kuril Islands, we can talk about three opposing visions, the first is negative, the second is positive and the third is realistic, we can explain what these visions are and what they support in the following way:

First: negative vision:

This vision assumes an escalation of attitudes between Japan and Russia due to the escalation in the Kuril Islands. If we exclude the armed conflict or any hostilities, these attitudes can lead to the weakening of political and economic relations between them. It will lead to noticeable progress in resolving the dispute over the islands. According to (Sergei Luzyanin), an expert at the Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow can put pressure on Tokyo to prevent oil and gas flowing into it, especially with the presence of many buyers in South Asia. Which may reach the impact of trade and economic relations. According to (Alexander Banov), the former Russian ambassador to Japan and professor at the Moscow Institute of International Relations (MGIMO University), there is no solid foundation for optimism and hope for the future of Russian-Japanese relations, because there is no need or interest to revitalize bilateral contacts. Russia is ready to return two islands to Japan (Habomai and Shikotan) under Article 9 of the Soviet-Japanese Joint Declaration of 1956, while Japan is committed to recovering the four islands. (35) Therefore, a solution to the islands crisis may not be reached and the peace treaty between the two countries may not be signed. In the short or medium term, thus the trend towards mutual escalation may be more severe than the Japanese side, as it is more affected by the islands remaining under Russian sovereignty. The following data are supported by this scenario or forward-looking vision: -

1. The Kuril Islands are an expansion that is desperately required by millions of Japanese, as well as being a winning political file to win the elections, and the islands are very important because they contain many economic marine resources as well as military and strategic importance. (36)

2. Strengthening Japan's international positions, expanding Japan's independence by demanding the closure of US military bases, and permanent membership of the UN Security Council, and condemning some countries' pursuit of nuclear weapons such as North Korea and Iran. (37)

3. Russia, as a superpower, cannot ignore or ignore Japan's aspirations to be an Asian regional and perhaps global power after that. The Kuril Islands are a strategically and militarily important region for Russia's security, and it is one of the strategic military bases for Russian submarines and fleet, and submitting these lands to Japan could mean undermining Russian national security.

4. That the Japanese security alliance with the United States means that Tokyo is not an independent diplomatic entity, which explains Russian concerns that Washington could place troops on the Kuril Islands if it returns to Japan, and this would lead to an increase in tensions between Russia and the United States. It gets worse if NATO decides to send troops to the islands, which is negatively reflected in the other political crises that are occurring with Russia in Eastern Europe. (38)

5. Another disappointing factor in bilateral relations is that, as a result of US pressure, Japan has joined countries that imposed sanctions on Russia in response to the crisis in Ukraine. This is a clear indication of Tokyo's solidarity with the West, especially with the United States.

6. The Russian government's taking some disturbing measures for the Japanese government: For example, Russia has strengthened its military presence in the Kuril Islands by deploying additional teams of Russian forces over it, and has chosen names for senior generals who are related to Russia's wars with Japan to launch on the Kuril Islands, and the frequent visits of officials to the islands. These actions spoil and hinder the development of Japan-Russia relations. (39)

7. There is also doubt about the feasibility of the economic aspect in Russian-Japanese relations, because foreign investors of different nationalities consider Russia an inappropriate place for investment, so even if economic sanctions are lifted, few attractive investment opportunities will be presented, along with the government routine and complicated procedures. Investing in them, and the history of the Russian government regarding the confiscation of private companies. (40)

Second: Positive vision:

This forward-looking vision is based on the fact that the facts of the reality confirm an improvement that might occur in order to resolve the crisis of the Kuril Islands, as the meeting in May 2018 between the leaders of the two countries (Vladimir Putin) and (Shinzo Abe) is No. 21, which confirms the depth of relations and continuous coordination. Besides Japan creating a special ministry for economic cooperation with Russia, the two parties agreed to set up a mechanism to expand and strengthen joint economic activities on the islands, as a prelude to resolving the dispute over them, and then signing a permanent peace treaty.

Since the early years of their assumption of the leadership of the two countries (Putin) and (Shinzo Abe), they have developed a strategy based on a national priority to open a new era of bilateral relations, because of the desire of each of them to leave a historical impact for their countries, so (Abe) wants to appear as a leader capable of returning part of the lost lands. During World War II, (Putin) hopes to emerge as a political figure capable of resolving regional disputes with most of Russia's neighbors, as has already happened when he reached a compromise in disputes with China and Norway. This is supported by the two leaders enjoying a high level of mutual trust. On several occasions (Abe) addressed the Russian president as a friend, and this was evident during his conversation with US President (Trump) on his visit to the United States in February 2017, in which he (Putin) described the person who he always kept his promises, as (Putin) said of the Japanese Prime Minister that he is a very reliable and honest partner, and that he is ready to reach an agreement on difficult issues. (41)

Therefore, it may be acceptable for Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party to reconsider its position on the issue of the Kuril Islands to wait for the recovery of two islands according to the 1956 statement, out of four islands, instead of entering into a stage of negotiating vicious circles with the Russian side whose contract passage only increases by clinging to. On the islands where he sees maintenance of his national security. The following data are supported by this scenario or forward-looking vision: -

1. Russia is more flexible and willing to compromise in the territorial dispute over the Kuril Islands, because Putin has shown willingness to return two islands to Japan (Habomai and Shikotan) under Article 9 of the Soviet-Japanese Joint Declaration of 1956, which restored severed diplomatic ties after the World War the second.

2. Russia's need for economic cooperation with Japan to export its energy resources, import advanced technology and develop its eastern provinces. For its part, Japan is interested in building stronger economic ties with Russia, so obtaining Russian energy resources will be of strategic benefit to it.

3. Russia fears that it will become the junior partner of China, given the increasing geopolitical and economic influence of China. So Japan may be a reserve unexploited by Russian foreign policy, because Tokyo can be a good partner for Russia in the Asia Pacific region. This partnership can help Moscow to overcome the technology gap and modernize its economy. This is necessary during the period of low oil prices, given Russia's constant need for raw materials. That is why Russia should be more active in strengthening ties with Japan.

4. Japan fears the formation of a Russian-Chinese partnership, which is already concerned with the increasing influence of China in the Asia Pacific region. Japan regards China's strength as a threat to its national security. Therefore, it is necessary (for Abe) to be friendly with Russia and to maintain positive relations with Moscow. (43)

5. Japan sees the annexation of Crimea to Russia as a precedent, and it evokes a regional dispute with China over the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea (a row that overshadows its differences with Russia over the Kuril Islands). Japan is seeking US support in the event of a conflict with China. But the problem is that (Shinzo Abe) cannot trust the United States, which is a major economic partner of China. (44)

6. Japan is a powerful energy importer, while European markets have begun to shrink from Russia's natural resources, and China has refused to pay higher prices for natural gas imported from Russia, so Russia's capabilities to provide the infrastructure that enables it to develop natural gas fields in the east have declined. Russian Far and then LNG export. Energy resources are flowing more than ever from the Middle East. All this makes Japan an important market for Russian energy export. (45)

7. Businessmen remain more optimistic about the relations between Russia and Japan. They believe that Russia can provide Japan with various infrastructure projects and technology transfer projects on a solid scientific basis, and economic relations are important and strategic to both countries. (46)

8. Cooperation in the security field, in an attempt to reach a kind of consensus on international security and political issues. Russia's interest in cooperating with Japan on security-related issues is a recent development. The motivation for their security cooperation is the concern of China. Indeed, Russia, as well as Japan, is worried about China and is therefore trying to achieve a more beneficial balance by continuing to improve its relations in the Asia Pacific region with Japan, Vietnam and the United States. (47)

9. The real intentions of Russian President (Putin) towards resolving the islands crisis with Japan. At the summit meeting between (Shinzo Abe) and (Putin) in April 2018, the two leaders issued a joint statement on developing the bilateral partnership and agreed to reactivate and accelerate negotiations on the peace treaty between the two countries. (48)

Third - realistic vision:

This forward-looking vision is based on the fact that the facts of reality tend to stay at the zero point and freeze the issue, and this possibility or scenario appears more realistic and more likely to occur than the possibility that says that the ruling party in Japan may be satisfied with obtaining only two out of four islands, because the position This party appears radical in the case of the Kuril Islands, as it clings to the four islands. (49)

It can be said that despite the improvement of diplomatic and economic relations between Moscow and Tokyo, the issue of abandoning and handing over islands is highly doubtful, and it is difficult for Japan to abandon its demands on the four islands, but it is also not expected that a dispute will arise between the two countries on the islands, All that could happen is for the islands to become a common investment area, while giving Japanese citizens free access to them. (50)

CONCLUSION

At a time when Russia has drawn its borders with China and arranged its borders with countries that separated from the former Soviet Union, Russia has not issued anything that reassures Japan that the settlement of the issue of the Kuril Islands is coming in the near horizon. This is the main challenge for Russian-Japanese relations, as it has overcome Russia directs its awareness that Japan is one of the former Soviet goals in Asian politics and is the normalization of relations with Japan because it is the most appropriate nation to provide Russia with the funds and technical knowledge that Russia needs to improve its economic position in the Russian Far East and other Russian regions. However, Russia must realize that this cannot be done without making concessions on the issue of the Kuril Islands.

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